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SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDED ADDRESSEE
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [KPKQ](#) [MOPS](#) [NI](#) [SU](#) [POLMIL](#)

SUBJECT: CONCLUSIONS ABOUT NIGERIAN MILITARY

DECISION-MAKING AND DARFUR

REF: A. IIR 6 871 0009 05

[¶](#)B. IIR 6 871 0005 05

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for Reasons 1.5 (B & D).

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary. U.S. efforts to assist Nigerian Army deployment to Darfur were obstructed by the Nigerian Defense Headquarters, apparently at the highest levels. U.S. provision of airlift for Nigerian troops to Darfur on October 28 was deeply resented by Defense Headquarters and the Nigerian Air Force and has highlighted ongoing Nigerian military anger at continued U.S. reference to the Benue massacre and our concomitant refusal to support the 72nd battalion, which was putatively responsible for it. The Chief of Defense Staff sees us as blaming the military for an atrocity that was the responsibility of President Obasanjo or others close to him.

[¶](#)2. (C) The Darfur lift episode highlights that the President prefers to work outside conventional military command structure, indeed, without much reference to it. But the President's personal focus on his role as an international leader outside of Nigeria combined with his incessant travel and unwillingness or inability to delegate, translates into insufficient attention and engagement to ensure that the military command structure implements his policies. The civilian Minister of Defense and the Minister of State for Defense appear to have little or no involvement in peacekeeping decision making, and the military command sees our efforts to engage with civilians on Darfur deployment or other military operations as irrelevant, if not irritating.

[¶](#)3. (C) Meeting these challenges and developing a security partnership with Nigeria in an AU context will require that we demonstrate our support for "African Solutions for African Problems" in our diplomatic and military tactics. We will also have to accept that it can take more time than we would like to work through operational issues and that identifying decision makers on any particular issue may be difficult. Military leaders may already have become sufficiently disenchanted with the U.S. to begin looking to build stronger ties with China. End Summary.

Military Obstructionism

[¶](#)4. (C) In the cases of specific obstructionism outlined below, the Nigerian Defense Staff and Nigeria's DIA appear to have lost sight of the fact that our actions were entirely supportive of Obasanjo's and the AU's Darfur goals.

--It was President Obasanjo and the AU that determined the October 28 date for Nigerian deployment to Darfur. Yet as late as October 22, the Nigerian military had no sense of urgency, and were proposing a planning meeting for October [¶](#)26. Only Chief of Army Staff Gen. Agwai's intervention-by telephone from Ghana-energized the planning.

--On October 27, the Nigeria Air force refused to provide a diplomatic clearance for the USAF C-130 flight from Kigali to Abuja. The flight had already left Kigali before the Nigerian Air Force relented, and then only because British funding for a Nigerian lift was not available.

--The Nigerian DIA repeatedly denied our request for a USAF survey team to visit the airports at Port Harcourt and Calabar, a prerequisite for the USAF to provide lift from those locations.

--The Nigerian DIA delayed for several days a response to the DATT's request to visit the 6th battalion, identified by the Army Chief of Staff for deployment to Darfur, to assess its readiness for its mission and identify the cargo that might be lifted by the USAF. This assessment, too, is a prerequisite for the USAF to provide lift. Eventually the Nigerian side relented, but refused the British DATT permission to accompany our DATT.

[¶](#)5. (C) On U.S. provision of lift on October 28, Gen. Ogomudia lashed out at us through the British DATT (ref A). He said that the Nigerian Air Force was ready, willing and able to conduct the lift and that the U.S. "went behind his

back" to do the mission. Left unsaid was what he thought the U.S. motivation was, though he has been prickly about others questioning Nigerian competence

Operational Environment

¶6. (C) Nigeria has an elaborate military hierarchy with large numbers of very senior officers. In theory -- but probably not in practice -- the chief of Defense Staff, Gen. Ogomudia, is at the pinnacle. However, the President regularly identifies himself in public as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. On peacekeeping issues, he appears to prefer to work directly with the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Agwai.

¶7. (C) On the civilian side, our experience has been that with respect to peacekeeping operations, Obasanjo ignores the Minister of Defense and the Minister of State. After the 2003 elections, President Obasanjo initially was inclined to serve as his own Minister of Defense. In the end, in support of his efforts to promote civilian control of the military, he appointed the defeated candidate of his party for Governor of Kano state. The Minister of State for Defense is a medical doctor who has proven to be energetic about improving conditions of service for military personnel. Neither appears to have much operational role with respect to peacekeeping.

¶8. (C) We see through a glass darkly as to how Nigerian military decisions are made, as does practically everybody else. Within the Nigerian government, legislative oversight of the military is only in its earliest infancy. The military's operating budget is unknown to all -- including, we suspect, the President and Defense Headquarters. For example, the military pays nothing for the electricity it receives from the relevant parastatal.

¶9. (C) The DATT, along with her colleagues, operates under serious constraints imposed by the Nigeria DIA. In effect she is forbidden to work directly with the senior reaches of the Nigerian military except through the Nigerian DIA.

Conclusions

¶10. (C) We suspect that the October 28 deployment date was determined by President Obasanjo and the AU without consultation with Gen. Ogomudia, but that Agwai was involved from the beginning. Subsequently, the Defense Headquarters appeared to be out of the loop, or, at best, several steps behind Agwai's Army Headquarters during the planning and decision making process. Nevertheless, Agwai's own ability to direct his nominal superiors is unclear. We do not think Agwai was responsible for the final Nigerian provision for a diplomatic clearance for the October 27 C-130 flight. Instead, there was a stand-off between the Army, which wanted the U.S. deployment, and the Air Force, which wanted to do it. The stand-off ended only when the Air Force saw that with the British withdrawal there was no alternative. Obasanjo, characteristically, was out of Abuja on October 27, as was Gen. Agwai, and neither appeared to referee.

¶11. (C) On the Darfur lift, it is unlikely that the military was deliberately stone-walling President Obasanjo, though that possibility cannot be ruled out. More likely, however, the seeming incoherence of Nigerian military decision making, at least with respect to U.S. help with lift for Darfur, reflects the bureaucratic and administrative underdevelopment that is endemic throughout the government of Nigeria. Obasanjo's own style probably exacerbates this with respect to the military. On Darfur, as on other issues of personal concern to him, he appears unwilling or unable to delegate much of the decision-making. Yet, it is impossible for him to devote his attention to many of the operational details. His personal focus is on his international responsibilities, not on the details of government: he serves as the head of the Commonwealth and of the AU, plays a major role in ECOWAS, and has ambitions for a Nigerian permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Implications for U.S. operations in this environment

¶12. (C) Obasanjo's operating style is unlikely to change. He will continue to make tactical and other decisions about peacekeeping without reference to the conventional military chain of command. In this environment, we are likely to have the greatest success when our tactics are clearly supportive of "African solutions to African Problems" and take into account the slow, round about nature of Nigerian military decision-making. However, this approach will also require us to accept that implementation will probably take longer than we would like or see as necessary. We may be asked to provide assistance in areas difficult for us, and our assistance in areas where it is easy for us may not be accepted. In terms of building our overall relationship with the military, the ending of the sanctions regimes that limit our provision of training might go far.

¶13. (C) In the end, our efforts to work with Nigeria's military while imposing sanctions and refusing to work with/support "pariah" units, may have pushed Nigeria's military leadership to look eastward for support. DATT received a report (ref B) that highlighted the military's concern over perceived "U.S. disdain for the leadership role of (Nigeria) in the West Africa subregion." This report also recommended to President Obasanjo "we turn to the Chinese for assistance, especially in the area of defense."

CAMPBELL